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ABSTRACT

Information concerning early retirement in colleges and universities was obtained through a faculty survey, prediction of rates of retirement and costs under three plans, computer simulations of faculty turnover rates, and faculty/administrator opinions and data pertaining to the implications of specific plans. In 1980, 647 faculty 45 years old and older in seven institutions of the Oregon State System of Higher Education were surveyed to determine the following: ideal or preferred age of retirement versus realistic or expected age of retirement and reasons for these choices; the preferred plan of three options; and retirement age each respondent might expect under each of the three options. Survey responses indicate that the three most important conditions that would allow faculty to retire at their ideal age are additional pay, insurance, and part-time employment. Response differences related to age, sex, rank, type of institution, subject area, years of employment in the system, feelings toward retirement, and adequacy of financial planning for retirement are considered. Of the three early retirement plans, 43 percent of respondents preferred the Public Employees Retirement System, 28 percent preferred a plan allowing part-time employment, and 11 percent preferred an income supplement annuity plan. Based on survey data, probabilities of early retirement for the three plans and ideal age were developed for two institutions, and faculty flow modeling was projected for a 20-year period. Cost analyses revealed that the Public Employees Retirement System plan generates the most savings. Implications of the early retirement plans in terms of retirement income level, and administrative, legal, political, and market feasibility are also addressed. A bibliography is appended. (SW)

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EARLY RETIREMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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EARLY RETIREMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

By

Barbara A. Mitchell, Ph.D.

Paper Presented to the Association for the Study of Higher Education
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Introduction

In the 1960's higher education was called upon to respond to expanding student enrollments; in the 1980's enrollments are expected to remain constant or decline. During the next decade of steady state, expansion of a program typically will take place only if another program contracts. In addition, shifts in enrollment patterns among programs will result in some areas of instruction having too many faculty and others having too few, a situation that calls for greater flexibility in staffing.

Compounding these conditions is the recent age 70 retirement legislation enacted by Congress. The central provision in the 1978 Amendments to the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) raises mandatory retirement age to 70. This change does not become effective for employees with unlimited tenure until July 1, 1982, under the federal law. In Oregon, however, the 1979 Legislature extended retirement age to 70 for all employees under the Public Employees Retirement System effective July 26, 1979, including faculty of the Oregon State System of Higher Education.

Interest in voluntary early retirement plans for higher education faculty stems from steady state conditions and prospects of an aging academic workforce. Early retirement programs are potentially useful tools to encourage turnover and revitalize faculty ranks, providing flexibility in program staffing and opening opportunities for young academics, including women and minorities. In addition, early retirement may be used as a fiscal policy to reduce payroll costs. Options also may provide the increased benefits to enable individual faculty who wish to retire early to do so.

Against this background, the purpose of this study is to provide some insights and planning tools for institutions and systems seeking solutions to a potential "staffing crisis" by changing personnel retirement policies. One such policy change may be the implementation of one or more voluntary early retirement programs for faculty.

The author is Asst. Director, Oregon Educational Coordinating Commission, Salem, Ore. The research was conducted for the Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Oregon. Copies of the paper are available by addressing the author at 1923 Sylvan St., Eugene, Oregon 97403.

The study addresses the following questions:

1. What factors are influential in or related to faculty members' intentions to retire early?

2. How much faculty interest is there in specific early retirement options?

3. What rates of early retirement might be predicted under specific early retirement plans?

4. What impact would early retirements have on faculty turnover rates at specific institutions?

5. What would specific early retirement plans cost and what would be the potential benefits?

6. What are the implications of specific early retirement plans in terms of various feasibility factors?

Literature Review. An extensive search of the literature was made through the ERIC computer system. While early retirement may be a much talked about topic in higher education, there is little solid empirical published work on early retirement for academics. Carl V. Patton's Academia in Transition (1979) is the only full-length, hard cover book identified. Several excellent surveys and issues reports have been published by TIAA-CREF and American Council on Education, as examples. Numerous articles have appeared in recent years, many of them in Academe, the American Association of University Professors newsletter. The empirical studies, however, are primarily in unpublished institutional reports, which were obtained by writing to institutions directly and from available files.

Importance of the Study. As an AAUP report of the Special Committee on Age Discrimination and Retirement (AAUP Bulletin, Sept. 1978, p. 187) notes:

> In fact, relatively little attention has been given to enlarging our understanding of the labor force participation rates of people approaching retirement or their responses to changes in retirement provisions and to incentive plans that might alter retirement rates. Likewise, relatively little attention has been given to developing a better understanding of how institutions can operate to affect the age structure of their faculties, to change the pattern of compensation by age, and to alter the incentives for inducing earlier retirement. None of this work to our knowledge has analyzed behavior in a framework that would lend itself to projection.

Concerned about the age 70 ADEA amendment, the report urged: "Deliverance lies in finding even less expensive methods of encouraging early retirement; such a study deserves immediate attention."

Methods

Questions designed for this study were included in a written questionnaire administered in April 1980 to all faculty age 45 and above in seven institutions of the Oregon State System of Higher Education. The institutions include three universities and four colleges (one a technical institute) governed by the State Board of Higher Education in Oregon. Personnel policies are made on a system-wide basis by this board and administered by the Chancellor and the President of each institution.

The research was conducted under the Early Retirement Project of the University of Oregon Institute for Social Science Research and funded by the Northwest Area Foundation.

Questions developed for this study were intended to solicit the following:

- Ideal or preferred age of retirement.
- Reasons for that ideal age.
- The three most important conditions that would allow respondents to retire at the ideal age.
- Realistic or expected age of retirement.
- Reasons for that realistic age.
- Retirement age each respondent might expect under each of three early retirement options described.
- The preferred plan of the three options.

Demographic data and several other variables also were of particular interest, including: Age of respondent, sex, rank, type of institution, subject area, years worked in the State System, feelings toward retirement, and adequacy of financial planning for retirement.

The three early retirement options developed for this study and described in the questionnare are as follows:

PLAN A: Part-time employment following early retirement, with continued medical and life insurance coverage. Part-time pay would be up to 25 percent of salary at retirement or $6,000, whichever is less. This option may be elected no earlier than age 60. The individual is not obligated to work until age 70. Regardless of the age at which the person chooses to quit working, the medical and life insurance coverage continues until Medicare eligibility begins.

PLAN B: A 6 percent income supplement for those faculty who announce by age 60 that they will retire by or before age 65. This annual salary addition would be paid into a tax-sheltered annuity. For example, a person with a $25,000 salary would accumulate an annuity over a five-year employment period (age 60-65) that would pay, due to interest earned, approximately $125 a month for 10 years (age 65 to 75).

PLAN C: Upon early retirement at age 60 (or later) receipt of full pension benefits based on years of service computed as if you had worked to the mandatory retirement age under the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System (PERS).

These three plans were used because they are currently either under review or in existence in the Oregon State System of Higher Education. A version of Plan A, part-time employment, has been used at Portland State Universiy and is being considered at the University of Oregon. A proposal similar to Plan B, the income supplement, has been developed at the University of Oregon and is awaiting review by the Chancellor's Office. Plan C is provided under current Oregon law and has been available since 1973. Features of the three plans are similar to several of the ten early retirement options described by Patton (1979).

Data Analysis. Cross tabulations are used to analyze retirement age responses with demographic factors as well as responses on feelings toward retirement and financial plans. As pertinent, chi square statistics are given to demonstrate a systematic relationship between two variables. In addition, results of tests for the difference between means are presented. These involve pairing each respondent's answers on retirement ages. Also, differences between means of two groups are developed--for age of respondent, sex, rank, and type of institution. In all cases, statistical significance is at the .01 level, one-tailed, requiring a t-value larger than 2.326.

Based on retirement age responses from survey data, probabilities for retirement ages under the three plans and ideal age were used as variables for faculty flow modeling and compared to current retirement estimates. One university and one college were selected for this computer simulation projecting for a 20-year period. Differences among plans and between institutions are analyzed and implications discussed. Cost analyses then are developed based on retirements expected from the computer simulation.

Finally, personal interviews with selected faculty and administrators and collection of information on Ph.D. production and state laws are used in discussion of implications in terms of legal, administrative, political, and market feasibility.

Results

Of the 1,222 questionnaires distributed to Oregon State System of Higher Education faculty, 647 were returned for a 53 percent response rate . This response was surprising considering the length of the questionnaire and short time for return. Clearly, the survey struck a responsive chord.

The size and distribution of the responses insure representativeness of the population, including by type of institution and subject area taught.

In terms of the questions posed, the following results were obtained:

1. What factors are influential in or related to faculty members' intentions to retire early?

   Conditions. Survey responses indicate that the three most important conditions that would allow faculty to retire at their ideal age are 1) additional pay; 2) insurance; and 3) part-time employment. Patton (1976) and Ladd-Lipset (1977) both found larger retirement benefits were the primary condition affecting earlier retirement, with part-time employment second.

   Age. Younger faculty (under 55) indicate earlier ideal retirement ages than faculty 55 and over. Difference of means tests between the two age groups is significant (t=3.11). This is consistent with the Ladd-Lipset finding of substantial increases in proportions of faculty planning to stay on until their late 60's or 70's once imminence become a factor.

   Sex. Women realistically expect to retire earlier than men (63.6 to 64.3). This is consistent with Patton's finding of 64.5 for women to 65.6 for men. More significant, in the statistical sense, is the difference between women's mean ideal age (59.5) and men's ideal age (61.2) in the present study.

   Rank. As with Patton's finding, full professors in the OSSHE survey ideally plan to retire later than faculty of lower ranks.

   Institution. College faculty indicate lower ideal retirement ages than university faculty in the Oregon State System.

   Subject Area. Business, health/P.E. and education faculty are most favorable to lower ideal retirement ages, while science, humanities and social science faculty prefer later retirement.

   Attitude. Those respondents with the most positive feelings toward retirement indicate earlier ideal retirement ages than those with negative feelings. Similarly, Patton found that those who plan to retire early tend to look forward to retirement.

   Satisfaction and Performance. Dissatisfied faculty tend to desire early retirement. The best researchers wish to retire at later ages. This is consistent with Ladd-Lipset's finding that faculty with the highest scholarship standing and performance want late retirement, while those with the fewest scholarly attainments are most interested in retiring early.

2. How much faculty interest is there in specific early retirement options?

   Survey responses show that respondents' mean realistic age of retirement is 64.24 compared to mean ideal age of 61.01.

Under the three early retirement options described in the questionnaire, respondents' mean retirement ages include:

Plan A (part-time employment)	62.5
Plan B (income supplement annuity)	63.6
Plan C (Public Employees Retirement System)	62.0

In terms of most frequently preferred plan:

Plan A	28%
Plan B	11%
Plan C	43%

In the present study OSSHE faculty exhibit an increased interest in early retirement compared to OSSHE faculty surveyed in 1973. More than 36 percent realistically expect to retire before 65, in contrast to 15 percent in the earlier survey (Oregon Legislative House Research Office, 1973). More than 63 percent in the present study give their ideal retirement age as below 65, with nearly half of those below 60.

The present study shows stronger interest in early retirement by Oregon faculty than the University of Southern California faculty (Peterson and Morey, 1976). For USC faculty, only 12 percent gave the expected or realistic age as before 65, and 36 percent listed under 65 as a preferred or ideal age.

3. What rates of early retirement might be predicted under specific early retirement plans?

From survey data, probabilities for the three plans and ideal age were developed for two institutions as variables from current probabilities in the computer model at the following key ages.

	U. of Oregon				Ore. Coll. of Ed.			
Age	A	B	C	Ideal	A	B	C	Ideal
60	.23	.16	.36	.42	.50	.24	.48	.69
62	.10	.07	.11	.06	.06	.07	.09	.06
65	.24	.30	.17	.16	.14	.30	.14	.04

These probabilities applied to individual faculty in the flow model determine the numbers of expected retirements and turnover rates.

4. What impact would early retirement have on faculty turnover rates at specific institutions?

Based on faculty flow modeling by computer simulation, results for a 20-year period show that for the University of Oregon Plan C produces nearly as many retirements (261) and faculty turnover (35.4%) as the ideal age. At Oregon College of Education, Plan A produces more retirements (69) and turnover (33.7%) than Plan C, but neither is as high as OCE's ideal age turnover rate (36%). Plan B results in lower turnover, with 31 percent for the UO and 29 percent for OCE; however, this rate still increases turnover from the current rates of 27 percent and 22 percent, respectively.

5. What would specific early retirement plans cost and what would be the potential benefits?

Cost analyses may be based on an assumption that positions freed will result in full salary savings or, conversely, that positions will be refilled with junior faculty if the institution is maintaining enrollments and requires replacement personnel. The latter "constant faculty" assumption was made for the cost analyses conducted in the present study. A companion assumption used was that institutions would elect to bring in young academics and to promote existing faculty into higher ranks vacated by retiring professors. Accordingly, replacement at assistant professor salaries was utilized for the funds freed analysis.

Systemwide estimates were extrapolated from the UO averages developed.

Costs and Savings Systemwide
(Estimates for 1 Year's Group over 10-Year Period)

	Plan A	Plan B	Plan C
Retiree Salary Savings, less	$4,086,000	$3,930,400	$6,936,000
Replacement Salary Costs and	2,592,000	1,958,400	3,456,000
Plan Costs	669,600	110,976	0
Net Savings for State System	$ 824,400	$1,861,024	$3,480,000

For faculty retiring in the State System in the 20-year period (but figured over 30 years) net savings would be roughly:

Plan A $16.5 million
Plan B 37.2 million
Plan C 69.6 million

Plan C generates the most savings, since costs of early retirement are borne by Oregon's Public Employee Retirement Fund. Even though fewer faculty are induced to retire early under Plan B than Plan A, Plan B results in greater net savings since plan costs are less than under Plan A, where retirees are paid for part-time employment and provided medical and insurance benefits.

Implications

6. What are the implications of specific early retirement plans in terms of various feasibility factors?

In addition to the replacement or turnover rate and funds freed, Patton (1979) suggests five other factors to consider in determining implications of early retirement alternatives: retirement income level, administrative, legal, political, and market feasibility. Information was collected on Ph.D. production and applicable state and federal laws, and interviews were conducted with an administrator and faculty representative from the UO, OCE, and OSSHE as to the political, legal, and administrative feasibility of the three plans.

Retirement income level should be one-half to three-fourths of pre-retirement salary, according to currently accepted estimates. Nearly half of survey respondents estimated their retirement incomes at this level, and another 23 percent expected 75-99 percent of pre-retirement salary. All of the three plans will contribute to achieving this objective. Plan C involves no work in exchange for the retirement benefit as contrasted to Plan A where part-time employment is involved. Plan B by itself may not be as feasible in reaching a desired retirement income level, but in concert with other options and Social Security at age 62, it would add to the retiree's benefits.

Administrative feasibility includes the need for changes in basic personnel policy before a scheme can be implemented, the source of funds with which to finance the plan, and the discretion to reallocate released funds. Plan A requires need for part-time teaching positions, and state rules on health benefits for part-time employees would need to be revised. Plan B will require care to comply with state tax laws, and institutions would need approval from the State System office to implement this option. Plan C is a currently available retirement option and therefore obviously is feasible; however, there is an apparent need to inform personnel of its availability and benefits.

The source of funds to finance the plans again makes Plan C highly feasible; funds do not have to be taken from the institution budget since benefits are paid from the state PERS fund. Plan A requires use of institutional funds, but services are provided in exchange for the payment. Plan B also would use institutional funds unless a special fund was established by the Legislature or the Chancellor for the institutions to use to encourage early retirement.

Administrators interviewed believed the three plans were feasible. The OCE provost cited three possible sources of funding: 1) from the salary improvement fund; 2) from salary savings; 3) from a Legislative supplement to the institutional budget.

Legal feasibility involves cognizance of any early retirement plans' present and potential legal implications. Will the alternative invite charges of discrimination from persons who feel that they are being forced to quit working because of age? What are the potential tax problems?

An Oregon Attorney General's review of the legality of the income supplement (Plan B) left some doubts under Oregon law; however, changing the annuity to a direct payment would avoid legal problems, the review noted. Plan A's health benefits for part-time employees require changes in state law and OSSHE rules. In an interview, the UO associate provost pointed out that legislation could be pinpointed to employees working under the 600-hour provision, rather than all part-time employees. Plan C is possible under current statute.

In terms of charges of discrimination, whether early retirement options will be challenged as violating the Age Discrimination in Employment Act or the due process and equal protection amendments to the Constitution may depend on whether the retirements are seen as voluntary.

Political feasibility involves labor-management relations and consideration of external factors. On the one hand, employee unions or faculty associations may react against an early retirement provision if it appears to infringe upon job security. On the other hand, early retirement may be supported as an employee benefit. External factors include sources from which approval of early retirement options must be obtained. If institutions or systems must deal with legislatures, early retirement provisions must not appear to be a gift of public funds. Also, in a public system a plan must be available to all, rather than a selected few.

Faculty representatives interviewed believed that there would be few internal political problems if the incentives were available uniformly to all eligible faculty and if they were entirely voluntary. The OCE faculty union plans to negotiate early retirement incentives in the next contract. This union president believes this approach will be easier than through the Board of Higher Education and that OCE may become a "pilot school." He sees little concern about job security if the contractual arrangement is arrived at through bargaining and cooperation.

Plan C is highly feasible since it is available to all faculty at present. Consideration should be given to the adoption of Plans A and B systemwide, as one may be more appealing and more effective than the other at one type of institution, as this study indicates.

Market feasibility relates to the faculty labor market. Plan A, part-time employment, has a potential shortcoming in that those faculty who wish to continue working may be in under-enrolled departments where it would be better if they were fully retired. However, a move from full-time to part-time employment in these cases still is beneficial. Plans A and C are high in feasibility in terms of finding replacement faculty as needed. Current Ph.D. production rates are such that a surplus of faculty is available in nearly all disciplines. The long-term picture is no better: recent statistics show virtually no growth in the faculty job market through the year 2000. By 1982, the surplus of supply to demand in new doctorates may be more than 16 percent; by 1986, the figure is predicted to be over 36 percent (Shulman, 1979,p.3).

Conclusion

The two most distinctive features of this study are that early retirement plans for a system of different types of institutions are considered and that the complete scope is covered-from surveying faculty, to developing predicted rates of retirement, conducting computer simulations of consequences, developing cost analyses of plans, and discussing implications of alternatives.

Early retirement can be viewed as an academic personnel policy to free faculty ranks so that persons with needed skills can be recruited. In this vein, early retirement can be used by the administration to shift

resources to needed areas, to new or expanding fields, or to programs that need rebuilding. By encouraging the early retirement of academics in out-of-demand fields, an institution can gain a few faculty positions to reallocate elsewhere.

When viewed as an academic personnel policy, the level of resources (faculty slots) is maintained. However, early retirement also may be seen as a fiscal policy. In a case where an institution is faced with a budgetary shortage, early retirement may be looked upon as a way to reduce payroll costs, assuming the institution can continue to function with a reduced staff.

Whether early retirement is used as an academic personnel policy to create turnover in faculty ranks or as a fiscal policy to save funds, research shows that early retirement options are potentially useful tools. By carefully setting benefit levels, by clearly stating the terms of an early retirement provision, and by approaching interested potential retirees, an institution may find advantages to carrying out an increased benefits early retirement plan.

Within systems of higher education, this study suggests that early retirement planning should not be limited to just one option, since one type of plan may be more useful to a research-oriented university with a mature faculty, while another may be better for a teaching-oriented college with a younger faculty age profile. In addition, because of faculty concern about equal treatment and uniformity, institutions should be free to use approved options. If one type of plan is provided in one instiution, it should be possible for faculty in another system institution to have access to that plan as well.

Before jumping on the early retirement bandwagon, institutions and systems must be certain as to their needs, the price they are willing to pay for turnover, and how changes in the early retirement rates will affect faculty flow at their own institutions. Systems and institutions must examine their own and faculty members' needs and determine possible effectiveness of various options in terms of the factors reviewed in this study.

"Blueprint" for Institution and System Administration

1. Survey faculty
2. Determine probabilities for retirement
3. Project retirements for the future and impact of faculty flow by computer simulation
4. Develop cost analyses of alternative early retirement plans
5. Consider implications in terms of feasibility related to administrative, legal, political and market factors.
6. Select appropriate early retirement plans and implement
7. Evaluate

Table 1

COMPARISON OF RETIREMENT PLANS
UO AND OCE OVER FIVE-YEAR PERIODS

Inst.	1980-84 No. Retired	1980-84 % Opened[a]	1985-89 No. Retired	1985-89 % Opened	1990-94 No. Retired	1990-94 % Opened	1995-99 No. Retired	1995-99 % Opened	20-Year Period No. Retired	20-Year Period % Opened
					Current					
UO	16.1	2.2%	45.7	6.2%	69.7	9.4%	66.9	9.1%	198.4	26.8%
OCE	5.7	2.7	9.4	4.6	12.8	6.2	16.6	8.1	44.5	21.6
					Plan A					
UO	38.4	5.2	64.6	8.7	68.9	9.3	68.7	9.3	240.6	32.5
OCE	10.4	5.0	17.5	8.5	20.6	10.0	20.9	10.1	69.4	33.7
					Plan B					
UO	30.4	4.1	63.9	8.6	66.8	9.0	71.8	9.7	232.9	31.5
OCE	9.0	4.4	12.3	6.0	17.2	8.3	21.8	10.6	60.3	29.3
					Plan C					
UO	41.0	5.5	72.8	9.9	71.9	9.7	75.8	10.3	261.5	35.4
OCE	10.6	5.1	16.1	7.8	19.8	9.6	18.1	8.8	63.7	30.9
					Ideal					
UO	46.0	6.2	69.8	9.4	73.9	10.0	79.4	10.7	269.1	36.4
OCE	11.8	5.7	21.2	10.3	23.0	11.2	18.2	8.8	74.2	36.0

[a]Percentage of 739 faculty for UO and 206 for OCE.

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